

# points of view

## The last straw

JUST THIS morning, I noticed that Jenn had placed four pencil-sized metallic tubes in the dish rack. Each was about six inches long and almost straw-like.

Needless to say, I was overjoyed.

"Where did you get the mini-blowguns?" I asked.

"What?! No! They are not blowguns! They are straws!" she said. "Straws, I tell you!"

"Oh, ah... sure..." I winked.

But, of course, she wasn't fooling me. I know a blowgun when I see it.

And just to prove it, I loaded a round toothpick in its chamber and pierced a paper bag at the far end of the kitchen.

Then I asked what was, I think you will agree, a very reasonable question, considering the circumstances.

"Did you happen to get any fast-acting poisons to tip our darts with?" I queried.

"Poison?" she said.

"Yes, I'm thinking curare," I said. "That's the traditional blowgun poison, right?"

"No, I did not get any curare!" she said adamantly.

"It's OK, you got the blowguns; that's the main thing," I replied.

But just as I was about to go online and order a vial or two of curare from Amazon, Jenn repeated her message once again.

"These are not blowguns," she insisted. "They are straws!"

That's when I realized what was going on.

"Look," I said. "Don't be embarrassed. You made a perfectly forgivable mistake. Blowguns, especially the small, concealable kind, look exactly like straws."

"Steve," she said. "Read my lips. These are reusable straws. Nothing more."



steve galea

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"You expect me to believe that?" I said. Then, to prove my point, I put the "straw" to my mouth and released a deep and sudden exhale, that propelled another toothpick dart at a fly on the wall, just barely missing it.

I would have launched another dart but Jenn raced over and shook the product package in my face. Sure enough, they were labelled as "straws."

This naturally led me to ask, "Why would anyone buy these?"

"Because they are reusable," she said.

I then pointed out that I couldn't remember the last time we actually used straws.

"I know," she replied. "But they look like fun and next time we need straws we have them."

"Blowguns are a lot more fun," I mumbled. "And we'll probably need those first..."

"They're straws," she said. "Got it?"

That's when she made me promise never to use her reusable straws for anything other than their intended purpose, which was, apparently, boredom.

Frankly, it was a crying shame – as well as a missed opportunity. After all, as hard as this is to believe, we North Americans do not spend enough time practicing with blowguns to be truly proficient with them. Which is not a problem now, but just wait until all those Central American howler monkeys expand their range and start making our roosters look like cooing doves.

Frankly, unless all those documentaries about hunters in South and Central America are wrong, blowguns are the only thing a howler monkey understands at 5 a.m.

Yet, this and the fact that monkeys are apparently edible, did not sway Jenn in the least. Go figure.

All she saw was another eco-friendly product.

"Can't I just use one as a straw and as a blowgun?" I asked. "I mean multi-purposing is really eco-friendly, right?"

I won't venture too deep in the way her mind works. Suffice it to say, after I showed her how deeply a toothpick can stick into the bottom of a full milk bag, a blowgun ban was unilaterally enacted in our house.

Basically Jenn declared what I was holding wasn't a blowgun but it was the last straw.



## pic of the past

Mervin Harrison joined the Royal Canadian Armed Forces and was with the Black Watch Regiment. He was killed in action on November 1, 1944 at the Battle of Antwerp. He is buried at Berlin Op Zoom, Holland. He was the son of Norman and Velma Harrison of Maple Lake. Photo originally submitted by Butch Harrison and printed in the Oct. 6, 2009 edition of the *Haliburton Echo*.

## Finding fun as cool weather arrives

We asked readers on Facebook: Now that days are getting shorter, what are you (and your family) doing for fun?

### Pat Barry

Puzzles, reading, baking listening to music and knitting.

### Dai Wanfei

Play tag. [Neighbourhood] walking (see the colour and moss on rock/trees), leaf/acorn/pine corn hunting.

Drawing/painting/make little craft/puppet show/lots of fun with my daughter.



Belinda Gallagher photographed this sharp-shinned hawk at her place in Tory Hill recently. Do you have any wildlife shots from your backyard? Send them to [jenn@haliburtonpress.com](mailto:jenn@haliburtonpress.com)



# points of view

## Oh, Christmas tree!

I'M NOT saying the world is a more complicated place than it used to be, but I will say this. This year, our Christmas tree came with instructions. Just to be clear, we did not purchase an artificial tree. No, it is a real tree that came from its natural environment – the grocery store parking lot. It was grown, as all wild Christmas trees are, with netting around it too. And, as God as my witness, it came with instructions. Look, I'm not exactly the most observant guy in the world, so maybe real Christmas trees have always come with detailed instructions and I just missed it. If so, forgive me for telling you what you already know. But, for me at least, this was a new one. Up till this moment, I always thought a man set up a Christmas tree in the living room or den using nothing but instinct, power tools and a fair bit of good fortune. Apparently, I was wrong.

There was a bright side to all this though – and it was my pup Rosie. Within seconds of Jenn showing me the instruction tag that came with the tree, that marvellous pup ripped it out of my hand and ate every last word. So, to this day, I don't know what they said. Now who's crazy for spending all that money on a pure-bred, huh? Thanks to Rosie, I had to follow in the steps of my forefathers and set up a Christmas tree in the living room using only prehensile thumbs and a limited capacity



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for reason.

But, you know what? I got it done without serious incident.

Sure, it took three tries, but once I remembered that the pointy end went up, everything else soon fell into place.

Which is to say, less than half an hour and several creative curse words later, I was wearing copious amounts of spruce pitch and a smile. And our tree was teetering precariously, just as God intended.

Yet, when all was said and done, a cold shiver ran down my spine. That's because I also realized how lucky we were. For, once again, I had cheated death and set up a Christmas tree without ever once looking at instructions.

It was like that five-legged IKEA chair all over again.

I will admit that I felt, and still feel, suitably proud of the accomplishment – sort of like an Instagrammer who made breakfast. For when I was done our majestic tree was situated in the living room where it would soon become an ideal ambush location for at least one psychotic cat – and a source of terror for two unsuspecting dogs.

I offered to decorate it too, but Jenn would have none of it. Perhaps it was her disdain for my vision of an antler-based tribute to the reindeer. Maybe it was because I wanted to place a trail camera on the tree to clear up this whole Santa Claus thing once and for all. I guess we will never really know.

What I do know is that Jenn was incredibly happy with the outcome, probably because I never once had to yell "Timber" and she never once had to dive for cover.

So much for yuletide traditions.

In any case, when she peeked her head around the corner and noted that the tree was secure, she stepped in tentatively and applauded.

I couldn't help but take a bough.



## pic of the past

This week's pic of the past appeared in the *Echo* on Nov. 14, 1979. Allin S. Copper, president of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 129 in Haliburton, salutes after placing a wreath at the cenotaph during Remembrance Day ceremonies held in Haliburton Village in 1979.

## letters to the editor

### Focusing on the wrong government

To the Editor,

*This Letter to the Editor is in response to the letter in the Dec.1 issue of the Echo from Greg J. Roe, who apparently represents "Concerned Citizens of Haliburton"*

In his letter to the editor of December 1, Mr. Roe correctly raises the point that governments are often known to "never waste a good crisis" to pass legislation that otherwise may not pass without strong opposition.

However, instead of focusing on the Ford government, he might want to take a look at Ottawa and what the Trudeau government is doing to destroy our country, as we knew it.

The Liberals are blatantly taking advantage of this pandemic to not only slide certain bills through Parliament, but to completely change the way our democratic, capitalistic (capitalism pays the bills!) way of life. One of the Liberal govern-

ment's strategies is to never let the truth get in the way of buying the next election with taxpayers' own money.

But maybe Mr. Roe did consider writing about the Trudeau Liberals, but quickly realized that such a letter would fill this newspaper several times over.

Another government deserving of criticism for seeking to push through important legislation during the pandemic is right here in Haliburton, where the county seems to be rushing its proposed shoreline preservation bylaw, when I believe appropriate laws already exist to preserve the shorelines and prevent inappropriate building too close to the water. Perhaps if more time and dollars were spent actually enforcing the existing bylaws, we would not need a new one.

Dave Love  
Haliburton Lake

New Cases Reported Today			
0	1	8	
Haliburton	KawarthaLakes	Northumberland	

  

Total Confirmed Cases to Date			
27	205	117	349
Haliburton (HAL)	Kawartha Lakes (CKL)	Northumberland (NTH)	HKPRDHU

  

COVID-19 Contacts, Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths by County							
County	Cases Not Resolved	Cases Resolved	Current High-Risk Contacts	Current Probable Cases	Hospitalizations (Total to date)	Deaths among Confirmed Cases	Deaths among Probable Cases
Haliburton	0	27	2	0	1	0	0
Kawartha Lakes	7	179	19	0	11	19	13
Northumberland	28	88	174	0	4	1	0

  

COVID-19 Contacts, Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths, HKPRDHU							
All Counties	Cases Not Resolved	Cases Resolved	Current High-Risk Contacts	Current Probable Cases	Hospitalizations (Total to date)	Deaths among Confirmed Cases	Deaths among Probable Cases
HKPRDHU	35	294	195	0	16	20	13

All confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Haliburton County have been resolved, and no new cases were reported in the Dec. 7 update by the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit. Two current high-risk contacts in the county remain, according to the data. /Screenshot from the HKPRDHU



# points of view

## If a tree falls

IF YOU HAVE owned a pet for any length of time, you probably know that they are born with a highly developed sense of selective hearing. For instance, you can call "Here kitty" to a cat all day long and it will act as if you haven't uttered a sound, but just try to open a box containing a 1000-piece jigsaw puzzle and see what happens.

This was made clear to me the other day when I snuck into the kitchen for a slice of the delicious homemade bread my daughter Carmen made for me. I did this as stealthily as I could, waiting intentionally for the moment when I knew both dogs were sound asleep in the living room before I made my move.

Then, like a hungry ninja, I slipped into the kitchen in my quietest socks, slid the bread out of the bag with the noiseless, deftness of Indiana Jones removing an artifact from a pedestal trap, and then sliced off a piece with the hold-your-breath silence and precision of a surgeon working around a still-beating aorta.

I buttered and spread jam across that slice with the same level of sound you hear from a group of kids when you ask, "Which one of you broke that window?"

But just as I thought I was about to get away with the perfect crime, a minuscule crumb tumbled off the edge of the slice and hit the ground with what must have been, for the dogs, a resounding thud.

"Noooooo!" I yelled.

And before I got to the exclamation point, both dogs were sitting at my feet, drooling heavily.

Bear in mind, these are the same dogs that feign deafness when you utter the phrase "Get off the couch!" Yet, as Jenn noted, they are somehow able to differentiate between the sound of opening a bag of coffee and a bag of cookies.

I believe this selective hearing is something that science and the dog training industry should study more. Perhaps a similar test could even be used by veterinarians when checking dogs for hearing loss.

I envision the day when a veterinarian will come out of the examination room and say, "Mr. Galea, I have some good news and some bad news. The good news is I dropped a piece of my ham sandwich at 40 yards and your dog heard it and came running...."

"And the bad news?" I would obviously ask.

"That will be \$80, plus cold cut fees."

If you do not own a dog you might think that this is a minor consideration. But let me assure you it is not.

The dog at your feet is not really the issue. Rather, it is the dangerous accumulation of dog drool and look of disappointment and hurt shot your way when you try to ignore them the way that some naïve trainers suggest – as if that's even possible.

Even the drool is not so bad, although, if one of your dogs is a Labrador retriever, you either need to be a fairly competent swimmer or wear a personal floatation device.

No, the looks of disappointment are the real problem. My mother is world-class in producing guilt-inducing glances, but honestly, she has nothing on my spaniel.

She gives you this look that says, "Sure, you say I'm your best friend, but you won't even share a slice of bread...."

There's just no way to resist those eyes.

I pointed this out to Jenn yesterday afternoon, shortly after the dogs and I heard her open up a bag of cookies.



steve  
galea

## Loon Tales



## pic of the past

Vehicular traffic on Haliburton's unpaved main street was light when this photo was taken in the early 1920s. This shot, looking west on Highland Street shows George Earle's store, now the Boatwerks, at the left with the awning advertising "boots and shoes." In the distance, behind the third car, is the Lucas family's Grand Central Hotel. The two buildings on the right still stand today as Bernstein's Store and McKecks Place. Thanks to the Haliburton Highlands Museum for the loan of this postcard.

## letters to the editor

# Wetlands should be protected and preserved

To the Editor,

Wetlands enrich our lives. They are places where we can observe and learn about a diversity of plants and animals while enjoying a quiet, natural environment. But wetlands accomplish much, much more. They are crucial in preventing climate change through carbon storage which takes place in vegetation, sediment and dead plants. Complementing our efforts to reduce the use of fossil fuels, removal of carbon from the atmosphere is essential to avoid a climate crisis. Wetlands are also instrumental in mitigating the impacts of climate change by controlling flooding and recharging groundwater.

It is critical that our natural wetlands be protected and preserved. When wetlands are drained or developed, the result is the releasing of carbon into the atmosphere. Mature wetlands develop over thousands of years and newly constructed ones will not reach the same carbon sequestering capacity or biodiversity within our lifetimes.

Unfortunately, in Ontario, the government has been changing laws to circumvent protections afforded to farmlands, wetlands and natural fea-

tures outlined in the Provincial Policy Statement. Within the budget bill 229, Schedule 6 limits the ability of Conservation Authorities to protect life, property and the environment. Schedule 3, of Bill 257 tabled by the Minister of Infrastructure, Laurie Scott, allows Ministerial Zoning Orders to override key provisions of the Planning Act, removing protections from environmentally sensitive lands. These are regressive, short sighted decisions which threaten the health and safety of our communities and our economic future. The public interest is sacrificed for the benefit of private developers.

It is time to chart a course to a green recovery with climate change at top of mind. Natural climate solutions such as protecting our wetlands would reduce our carbon footprint, ensuring a better future for ourselves and for generations to come.

Elizabeth Turner  
CCHC

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Have a thought, comment or opinion you'd like to share?

Send a letter to the editor to  
mike@haliburtonpress.com